

# Happiness Pony

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And then another unexpected thing happened.

July 2012



Amanda Kidd Schall  
art from bicycles  
etsy.com/shop/SeamsAndStuff



#### Beetles & Clowns

Miss Mary Rose Poppin writes to alert us to the resemblance between the Asian long-horned beetle (scourge of local trees) and “clown” kachinas, both of which have black-and-white-striped antennae.

**Kachinas** are spirits in the Pueblo religion. In rituals, they are represented by dancers or by dolls. These manifestations serve as reminders of social norms and the balance of all forces in the universe. The clown kachina pictured above, Payakyama, is a glutton and reinforces good conduct through the negative example of its own terrible behavior.

The **Asian long-horned beetle**, through no fault of its own, has no natural predators in New England, and is therefore thrust into the role of the glutton. The beetle eats its way through vast forests, leaving only crumbs of maples scattered on the forest floor.

“Bad clowns” continue to have a role in city life. In the early 1990s, Antanas Mockus, mayor of Bogota, Colombia, hired 420 nimes to mock jaywalkers and reckless drivers in an attempt to reduce traffic fatalities.

Worcester’s own clown kachinas, the **Juggalos**, also serve society through their wild behavior, warning West Siders against overindulging in Faygo and weed. (Mike Benedetti & Jen Burt)



Kachina by Jesse Walter Fewkes, 1894. Beetle and Juggalo photographs by Mike Benedetti.

Three Demons of Worcester  
• Asian Long-horned Beetle  
• Kirsch Liquors  
• Kevin Ksen Except Evil  
(Jacob Berendes)

## John Lurie

*I was on Main Street in Worcester, Massachusetts at 4AM, just walking around. I ran into this black guy, he was about 22. This guy was pushing a wheelbarrow full of dirt down the street. He explained that he was going to plant an organic garden on his roof. He also told me that he had just seen a statue turn into an angel. He said it in such a way, that I believed him. We started talking about music. He took me to his house where I had to be very quiet because his mother was asleep. He gave me a tenor saxophone and a bicycle. This is how I started playing the saxophone.*

John Lurie grew up in Worcester. In the late 1970s he moved to New York City and became a renowned jazz musician, composer, bandleader, actor, painter, and TV fisherman. Those curious about his work might start with the Lounge Lizards song “Voice of Chunk,” the Jim Jarmusch film “Stranger Than Paradise,” his painting “Bear Surprise” which became a Russian internet meme, and his television program “Fishing With John.” The man who gave him his first sax was probably James Washington. (Saxophone quote from an interview with Tim Broun in “Perfect Sound Forever.” Bio by Mike Benedetti. Cut out the lightly-shaded area of this page and you will have a John Lurie stencil made by Ben Cummings. Thanks to Brian Goslow and John Lurie.)

## Bad Meetings All the Way Down

The world is a fabulously absurd place—full of both double popsicles and crop failure. Albert Camus (car accident enthusiast and absurdist philosopher) thought that despite the apparent meaninglessness of life we need not despair, for in a world of absurdity why is despair and suicide any more reasonable than happiness? Rejoice in putting one over on meaninglessness. Taking absurdism as a point of reorientation in struggling for ourselves and others is a great and powerful concept. However, despite my respect and love for Camus’s “quit yer bellyachin’ Sartre” philosophy I have come to believe in **bad meetings** rather than the absurdist defiance of white noise.

Looking closely at the world, one finds that it is entirely composed of bad meetings. Exhibit A: Wikipedia. One usually uses Wikipedia to fact-check bar arguments—for which it is a formidable beacon of truth that reflects the universe exactly. However, if one inspects Wikipedia it is not made up of the chaos claimed by absurdist. Rather it is entirely given meaning by bad meetings. View the Talk page for the Tooth Fairy to fully understand the bad meeting as the fabric that lends the world its substance: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Tooth\\_fairy/Archive\\_1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Tooth_fairy/Archive_1)

This is but one example of the bad meetings behind our world. *Happiness Pony* is produced using bad meetings. Several hundred bad meetings produced your breakfast. If something was not created on histories of bad meetings and interconnected layers of time spent drawing on white boards, it is never the less subject to the authority of a future meeting. The gods that condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly roll a boulder up a hill only to watch it fall down the other side? That’s right, they had a bad meeting about it. Everything we believe now is subject to a meeting later. Science is a meeting. Fashion.

But what makes them all bad meetings? If they weren’t bad, we would have stopped having them by now. Meetings promise solutions; most meetings deliver more meetings. We are doomed to continue meeting, vainly hoping that one day the alchemy of our facilitation brings about the perfect meeting and there will be nothing but handwritten notes in a void. It is the time between meetings that interests me. For if we attend these meetings in sorrow, we may also attend them in joy. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (Shane Capra)



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#### Book Review: Read This Before Our Next Meeting


This book has some great ideas for better meetings. But I have two problems with Al Pittampalli’s *Read This Before Our Next Meeting*. First, we don’t need more ideas for different meetings (there are plenty out there), we need tactics for the very difficult task of changing “meeting culture” in our organizations. You can imagine the challenge of (as Pittampalli suggests) requiring attendees to read an informational memo before the meeting (or else not be allowed in), requiring meetings not be brainstorming sessions, and limiting attendees to only those who really need to be there. Without plans for changing meeting culture itself, books like this are just business fiction.

My other concern is that meetings aren’t just tools for quickly ascertaining action items and making decisions. Done correctly, they can be a way to strengthen a team and educate attendees. Pittampalli at times forgets that human beings, not computers, are the ones attending meetings. (Nicole Apostola)



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Charles Robinson, 1895

Answers to "Quiz Corner"

- South Sudan
- Unified Team
- The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
- The flag of the City of Los Angeles
- Chinese Taipei
- West Germany and East Germany

Bonus: "Ode to Joy"

# The Sixteen Flavored Coffees of Sunrise Cafe

Like you, I have been curious about the 16 flavors of coffee advertised at the Sunrise Cafe (571 Park Ave). Thus I made it my summer goal to try every flavor. I now realize the truth: despite the exterior promise, the menu inside lists 13 flavors, two of them—Pumpkin Spice & Eggnog—"seasonal" and currently unavailable. Those I have tried fall into the four categories listed below. The flavors are indistinguishable within each category.

*Tastes Like a Pastry*  
French Vanilla  
Hazelnut  
Caramel Nut Crunch  
Cinnamon Sticky Bun  
Chocolate Cappuccino  
Chocolate Raspberry  
Tropical Coconut

*Tastes Like an Alcoholic Pastry*  
Kahlua Cream  
Irish Cream

*Tastes Like Blueberry*  
Blueberry

*Tastes Like Pistachio*  
Pistachio

"The paradox of choice" holds that our effort to process too many choices just makes us anxious. Overload. I order #86 every time I go to Da Lat. I spend more time trying to pick movies than actually watching them. I don't need 16 (or even 13) flavors of coffee. Though I do enjoy getting my caffeine fix at endearing local establishments with picnic tables. And I'm still wondering about those three missing flavors. (*Jen Burt. Unrelated illustration by Ivy C. Powers from her coloring book GIRLZ.*)

## Just the (Summer) Tips

**Shiso**, also known as Perilla, beefsteak leaf, beefsteak plant, and purple mint, tops my list of favorite new foods. Red or green, shiso is a culinary herb and an essential spice in Japanese cooking. Red shiso brings anise to mind; green shiso is said to taste of spicy cinnamon. My sweetheart and I have brewed tons of shiso lemonade this summer, shared the refreshing bev wherever we go, always to rave reviews. I recommend making this recipe with red shiso, as the purple leaves color the water magnificently. Check out the recipe below, brew, and drink up! Seriously, this shiso *shit-is-so* good! If you'd like to get your hands on some herb, come find me. JB is another promising source.

**Shiso Lemonade** (compliments of John Mitchell)

2 cups water

1 cups sugar

Handfuls of shiso leaves

Boil for 10 minutes. Strain leaves. Chill the syrup. Add syrup to 1 cup lemon juice and 1 gallon (sparkling) water.

**Water.** To be in water. To move body through water. If you're totally under water, could you say you're inside water? Hmm. The point is swimming. All the swimming! Haven't done nearly enough of it this summer. But when I have, I've experimented with the sidestroke (the most literally-named swim stroke). Turns out, it is the best! On many counts. Not only does the sidestroke maintain good neck/spine alignment, it seems to offer a nice view. At the beach you can always either be watching the sea's endless horizon, or the movie picture show that is the beach in summertime. Recently, I read it is like swimming with one side of your body while the other side takes a rest. And as you can imagine, it's especially useful in lifesaving situations.

**Okra** is in season! Small, firm pods are ideal for cooking, though large pods can be ground into a tasty, protein-rich flour. Do not fear okra's sticky oozing juice, known as mucilage. It's a useful thickener where desired, but can be avoided by not overcooking and not adding liquids. Really, it's as simple as slicing it and cooking in oil. The mucilage soothes irritated membranes of the intestinal tract. Think . . . that nice feeling you get when you swallow a mouthful of aloe gel. (*Patricia Kirkpatrick*)



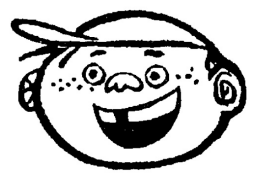
### Olympic Quiz Corner

BY ADAM VILLANI  
The Olympic Flag, with its five interlocking rings against a white background, was designed by Olympic pioneer Pierre de Coubertin and first displayed at the 1920 Games in Antwerp, Belgium. Since then it's become one of the Olympics' most enduring symbols.  
Occasionally, athletes whose home countries are embroiled in some kind of geopolitical complication have competed under the Olympic Flag or another neutral flag instead of their country's national flag. Can you answer these questions about unusual flags at the Olympics?

- At the 2012 London Olympics, African marathoner Guor Marial will be competing under the Olympic flag because his native country, which only gained independence on July 9, 2011, is too new to have organized a National Olympic Committee. Which country is that?
- The 1992 Olympic Games in Albertville and Barcelona came shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The three Baltic States competed under their own flags, but participants from the 12 remaining ex-Soviet Republics competed under the Olympic Flag. What did they call their team?
- The United States led a 65-nation boycott of the 1980 Moscow Games. Several prominent allies, such as Australia, France, and the United Kingdom, however, allowed their athletes to choose whether or not to participate, but had them compete under the neutral Olympic Flag. What was the stated reason for the boycott?
- Traditionally, in the closing ceremonies, the national flag of the closing host nation is lowered and the flag of the next host nation is raised. Because of the u.s. boycott, the American flag was not raised at the close of the 1980 Moscow Games in anticipation of the 1984 Games in Los Angeles. What flag was raised instead?
- Because of ambiguity over its political status, what name has Taiwan used since 1980 in Olympic competition, while flying a white flag showing the five Olympic rings and a sun surrounded by a stylized, five-petaled, red-white-and-blue flower?
- What two countries competed together in the 1960 and 1964 Olympics under a flag consisting of their shared tricolor superimposed with five white Olympic rings?

Bonus: For the team in question 6, what familiar Beethoven classic was played at medal ceremonies instead of a national anthem?

Quizmaster Adam Villani won Ben Stein's Money, but lost to all-time champion Ken Jennings at Jeopardy!



### HAPPINESS PONY Income Statement June 2012

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